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FOR NEA/ARP AMACDONALD
FOR SEAS S/E GRICKMAN

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TAGS: PHUM PREF KIRF YM

SUBJECT: REYDA JEWS FACE NEW THREATS OF VIOLENCE IN WAKE OF MURDER

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen Seche for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Days after the December 11 murder of a Yemeni Jew in Reyda, the town's Jewish community reports continued harassment and violence, and complains of ROYG inaction. Minister of Interior Rashad al-Masri assured the Ambassador on December 13 that the ROYG would protect the nation's dwindling Jewish population, but the situation continues to deteriorate in Reyda. Post continues to press the ROYG for action, and recommends SEAS Rickman convey this message to Yemeni Ambassador al-Hajjri (see para 7). END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Moshe Yaish Nahari, a prominent member of the 55-family Jewish community in Reyda, a town north of Sana'a, was shot and killed there on December 11. Within hours of the killing, security forces arrested a suspect, Abdulaziz al-Abadi, according to Haim Yaish, one of Moshe's brothers. Press reports indicate that al-Abadi, called "an extremist who suffers from mental problems" by Amran Deputy Head of Security Ahmed al-Sarihi, has confessed to the slaying. Abadi reportedly murdered his wife two years ago.

¶3. (C) On December 13, the Ambassador pressed Minister of Interior Rashad al-Masri to thoroughly investigate the case and ensure that the Reyda Jewish community is protected from further attacks. He also asked the Minister to make arrangements to move any of the Reyda Jews who wish to do so to Sana'a. Al-Masri assured the Ambassador that the ROYG will continue to protect Yemen's Jews. He denied that the killing was religiously motivated, instead calling it a "criminal act" perpetrated by a single individual and said the event was not indicative of the wider situation for Jews in Amran governorate. The Minister rejected the allegation that roadblocks had prevented Reyda Jews from traveling to Sana'a last week, countering that community representatives met with his deputy at the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) in Sana'a on December 11. (Note: Post confirmed the meeting with contacts in Reyda, who said the Deputy Minister had promised the Jews protection, but that local security services were failing to follow through on MOI's instructions. End Note.) Al-Masri further promised to investigate claims that the Jews in Reyda are subject to regular harassment and intimidation.

¶4. (C) Yahya Yaish, the victim's brother and a rabbi in Reyda, told POL/E FSN that his home has been surrounded since December 13 by several armed men who have thrown stones at his house and shot at his roof. His family is unable to leave home for fear of harassment and violence, he said. He also reported that the murder suspect was one of eight persons arrested in Reyda on charges of harassing the town's Jewish population; the other seven men were quickly released and continue to harass the Yaish family, according to Yahya. Haim Yaish, a brother of Moshe and Yahya, told POL/E FSN on December 15 that the brothers' wives have been beaten and threatened at gunpoint by men from the town. According to Haim, the attackers have said they want to "terminate the Jews from the area." The Yaish family called the local police for help on Saturday, and two DSHK's, 12.7mm truck-mounted machine guns, were sent to protect the house. Haim reported that the DSHK's were "chased away" by the harassers after only 12 hours, and there has been no security presence at the house since then. Haim reported that he and his family want

to move away from Reyda, even if it means "leaving everything behind."

¶15. (C) Saeed Israel Saeed Halla, another member of the Jewish community in Reyda, told Pol/E Chief and Pol/Off that an explosive device was thrown at his home from a moving vehicle around 1 a.m. on December 15. It bounced off the window and exploded outside his residence with no casualties reported. Halla and a delegation of up to 25 Reyda Jews are traveling to Sana'a on December 15 for a meeting with Sheikh Abu Shawareb, an important leader from Amran governorate. EmbOffs plan to meet with Halla and his delegation at 4 p.m. today, and will report results of that meeting. Halla also told Pol/E Chief and PolOff that he does not want to remain in Reyda.

¶16. (C) During a conversation December 15 with close Presidential advisor Abdul Karim al-Eryani, the Ambassador expressed his concern over recent events in Reyda, a concern that Eryani said he shared. "I fear that the Yemeni tradition of obligatory protection for the Jews is disappearing," he said, noting that in the past this tradition bound both tribal leaders and the government itself to take measures to ensure the safety of Yemen's Jews. He said that, if the Reyda Jews feel strongly that they must re-locate to Sana'a in order to avoid further acts of violence, he supported this course of action, and would convey his views to President Saleh at the first opportunity. He added that he would also encourage the ROYG to facilitate the departure from Yemen of the remaining Jews if that is what they wish, although he observed that he would deeply regret such an outcome, since Judaism in Yemen pre-dates the arrival of Islam.

¶17. (C) The Ambassador will raise this issue with Deputy Foreign Minister al-Dhabbi on December 16. He also has asked to meet with Minister of Human Rights Huda al-Ban, who is currently traveling, as soon as she returns to Sana'a, and has requested a follow-up meeting with Minister of Interior al-Masri. Post recommends that Special Envoy Gregg Rickman meet soonest with Yemeni Ambassador Abdulwahab Al-Hajjri in Washington to further press the Yemeni government to take all necessary measures to protect the Reyda Jews.

COMMENT

¶18. (C) The Minister of the Interior's assurances of protection for the Reyda Jews notwithstanding, the murder of Moshe Yaish Nahari and evidence of subsequent intimidation point to a sharp deterioration in their situation. Post will continue to press ROYG officials to take specific measures to protect the Reyda Jews, including moving those who wish to do so to Sana'a. END COMMENT.

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